

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Bank of Tryon Building

Tryon, Polk County, PL0045, Listed 1/17/2008

Nomination by Clay Griffith

Photographs by Clay Griffith, August 2006



Façade view



Rear view

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name Bank of Tryon Buildingother names/site number Tryon Daily Bulletin Building; Hester Building**2. Location**street & number 16 North Trade Street not for publication N/A
city or town Tryon vicinity N/A
state North Carolina code NC county Polk code 149 zip code 28782**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination/____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ____ nationally ____ statewide X locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official_____
DateNorth Carolina Department of Cultural Resources_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official_____
Date_____
State or Federal agency and bureau**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

____ entered in the National Register
____ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the
National Register
____ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the
National Register
____ removed from the National Register
____ other (explain): _____

Bank of Tryon Building
Name of Property

Polk County, North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed
In the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/granite

Brick

roof Synthetic/rubber

walls Brick

other Stone/granite

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1908-1957

Significant Dates

1908

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository:

Polk County Public Library, Columbus, NC

Polk County Historical Association, Tryon, NC

Bank of Tryon Building
Name of Property

Polk County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.08 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 17 387190 3896760
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____
____ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clay Griffith

organization Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. date August 23, 2007

street & number 825-C Merrimon Ave., #345 telephone (828) 281-3852

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Jeffrey A. and Helen S. Byrd

street & number 11 Freeman Hill Court telephone 828-859-9151

city or town Tryon state NC zip code 28782

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 Bank of Tryon Building, Polk County, NC

Section 7. Narrative Description

Built in the winter of 1907 and 1908 at 106 North Trade Street¹ in Tryon, North Carolina, the Bank of Tryon Building is a two-story, brick, Romanesque Revival-inspired commercial building erected for the first bank established in Polk County. At the time of its construction, the building was a freestanding structure 25 feet across the front and 50 feet deep. The west-facing bank building² stood to the north of the building housing the Ballenger Company, a general merchandise store located at the northeast corner of Trade and Oak streets in the center of Tryon's burgeoning commercial district. The bank was later enlarged to the rear—probably in the late 1910s and certainly before 1929. According to Sanborn maps the block of commercial buildings facing Trade Street and extending from Oak Street north to Maple Street was completely developed by 1929, and the Bank of Tryon building adjoined two-story brick buildings on either side. Following a merger with the People's Bank & Trust Company in 1927, the Bank of Tryon sold the building to the daughter of the bank's cashier who leased the offices to various businesses. The building was later purchased by Seth M. Vining to house the *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, a newspaper he established in 1928. The *Tryon Daily Bulletin* moved its offices into the old bank building in 1935, and the newspaper operation grew steadily during the second half of the twentieth century leading to Vining's purchase of the structure in 1959.

The bold two-bay façade of the Bank of Tryon Building features granite quoins, second-story Palladian-type windows, and a projecting parapet rising from heavy corbelled brackets. Two separate entrances with transoms are positioned to the north of a large segmental arch window. The centrally-located main entrance contains a replacement single-leaf glazed door. The north entrance contains double-leaf three-panel doors and opens into a stair to the second floor. The doors are replacements from the 1990s designed to match the configuration of the original glazed-and-paneled exterior doors, which are now in use on the interior. The front window, which rests on a granite sill, was replaced in the 1970s with a multi-light segmental-arched window after the façade was damaged in an automobile accident; the window sash was replaced again in 1998 with a similar design. Substantial rough-faced stone lintels above the doors and rough-faced voussoirs over the window help to form a prominent belt course. Similarly, a stone belt course on the second story encompasses the stepped stone lintels above the two window bays, each consisting of single flat-headed windows flanking a center arched window. The second-story front windows are all one-over-one double-hung wood sash and the two groupings rest on granite sills. Yellow brick is used to form the

¹ In 2000, when the county was renumbered for EMS service, the address of the Bank of Tryon building was changed to 16 North Trade Street.

² The Bank of Tryon Building faces southwest, but for clarity of the descriptions herein, the building will be described with an east-west orientation.

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corbelled brackets supporting the projecting stepped parapet in the upper façade, as well as three decorative diamond patterns in the face of the parapet. A sheet metal coping has been fitted to the front parapet.

The side elevations of the original building contained three bays of single arched window openings on the first and second stories, but these window openings were bricked in when the adjacent buildings were constructed. At the rear of the north elevation, three three-light wood sash hopper windows are located at the top of the wall on the second story. The three-story rear elevation is quite plain. A concrete ramp leads to double-leaf metal doors accessing the basement level. The doorway was enlarged around 1992 and the new metal doors installed. A single six-over-nine double-hung window to the north of these doors provides some light to the basement. Two pairs of tall, metal-frame, first-story rear windows, which are replacements from the 1970s, fit within brick segmental arches and illuminate the main floor of the interior. A metal fire escape landing extends north from an adjacent building to allow emergency egress through the moveable lower pane of the bank building's south window; the other three windows are all single paned. The fire escape, which was added in 1997, is supported on slender metal brackets. Four six-over-six double-hung wood windows on the second story appear to be original sash that have been repaired.

The interior of the building has evolved over time as the tenants of the building have changed, but the interior still retains much of its historic character. The primary interior change occurred in the late 1920s or early 1930s when the first-story banking floor was partitioned for offices. Original interior features include the first-story decorative pressed-tin ceiling, concrete bank vault and safe, exposed brick side walls, beaded board ceilings at the rear and on the second story, glass block skylights between the first and second stories, and hardwood floors on the second story.

The first story has been carpeted and a beaded board wainscot has been added throughout the front part of the building. Dropped acoustical tiles, installed in the 1970s, were removed in this area to reveal the original pressed-tin ceilings. The front reception area contains a large L-shaped wood counter and new heart pine flooring installed over the original floor. A double-leaf entry with narrow glazed and paneled doors at the northwest corner of the reception area opens into the stair to the second story. Door surrounds are typically fluted with bull's eye corner blocks. Three offices were partitioned along the south wall after the building ceased to be used as a bank, and a restroom was added at the end of the first-story hall. The first-story offices, with the exception of the center office, are finished with wood wall paneling and dropped acoustical tile ceilings added in the 1970s. The wall paneling and dropped acoustical tile ceiling have been removed from the center office to reveal the original pressed-tin ceiling, brick side wall, and sheetrock partition walls. In the rear office a decorative surround, featuring Corinthian pilasters, entablature, and a lion's head keystone, frames a metal vault door that opens into a large walk-in concrete bank vault with a barrel-vaulted ceiling. The original bank safe, manufactured by the Mosler Safe Company of Hamilton, Ohio, remains in place in the vault. A new stair along the north wall of the building was constructed in 1997 for additional egress from the second-story offices. At the rear of the first story, a large office fills the full width of the building and contains a small restroom located against the south wall. The restroom, which

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Bank of Tryon Building, Polk County, NC

features plaster walls and a six-panel door, appears to be original to the rear section of the building, added in the late 1910s or 1920s.

The second story of the interior is accessed by double-leaf doors from both the exterior, through the northernmost front entry, and the first-story front reception area, each opening into an enclosed stair at the northwest corner of the building. The interior opening to the stair was created in 1996, using the original glazed-and-paneled exterior doors. A wide hall runs nearly the full length of the building along the north side with access to individual offices at the front, rear, and along the south side of the building. A small office near the front of the building was converted for use as a kitchen in the 1990s. A restroom and adjacent storage closet, probably both dating from the 1920s, are located along the hall and feature plaster walls and six-panel doors. Glass block skylights set in concrete in the second-story floor helped to illuminate the center sections of the first story and were once located beneath roof skylights, which have been removed due to leaking. Second-story office doors are wood paneled with privacy glass and transoms. Six-panel wood doors access utility or storage rooms. The door to the large front office, occupying the full width of the building, still bears the stenciled name of the Tryon Beauty Shop. Although the original pine floors are still visible in the hall, the stairs and offices have been carpeted.

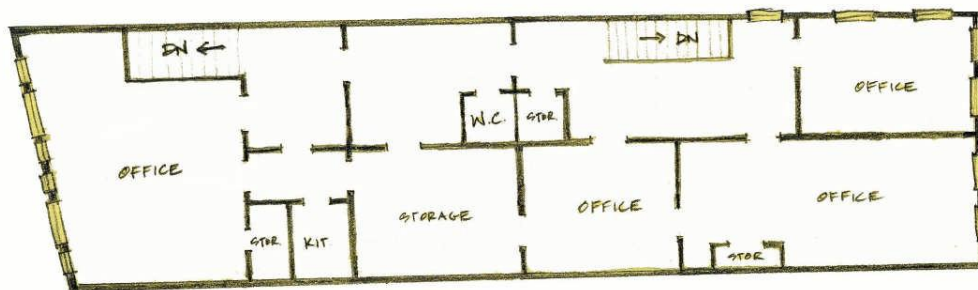
The basement of the building, which holds the printing operations of the newspaper, is utilitarian in character with exposed brick and stone walls, concrete floors, beaded board ceilings above exposed heavy timber floor joists, and steel columns. The stair to the basement is located beneath the main stair and accessed from the first story, at the rear of the stair enclosure, through a single-leaf paneled wood door. In 1992, the original boiler was removed from the basement, a new floor was poured, and the original wood posts were replaced with steel supports. A popular barber shop occupied the southwest corner of the basement, but in the 1990s the space was converted to a photography darkroom. The barber shop was accessed directly from the exterior by a concrete stairwell from the sidewalk on Trade Street. The stairwell was closed in the 1970s, when a front addition was built onto the adjacent Ballenger Company building, thereby covering the stair opening. A sliding metal door on the south wall originally opened into the basement of the Ballenger Company building from the barber shop, but the opening between the two structures has been closed. A restroom and small shower, used by customers of the barber shop, are located to the east of present darkroom. Beyond the original rear wall of the building, the concrete floor slopes down to the rear section of the basement. On the south side of the basement a sizeable room with poured concrete walls and a vaulted ceiling supports the bank vault above. Due to the solid construction of the space, the Vinings appear to have used the room for secure storage, but currently it stands empty. Around 1995, a new opening into the basement of the adjacent building was created at the southeast corner of the basement and modern double-leaf metal doors were installed.

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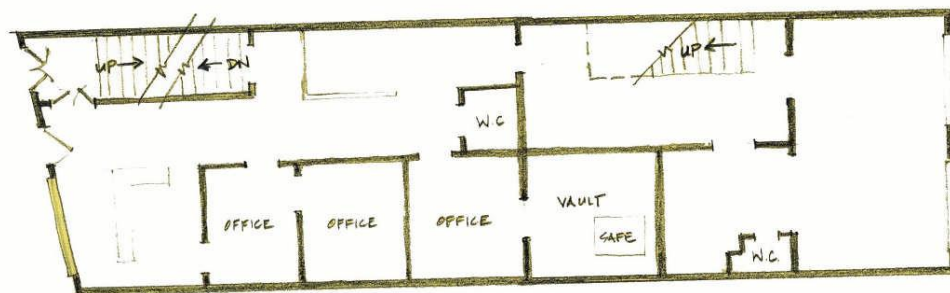
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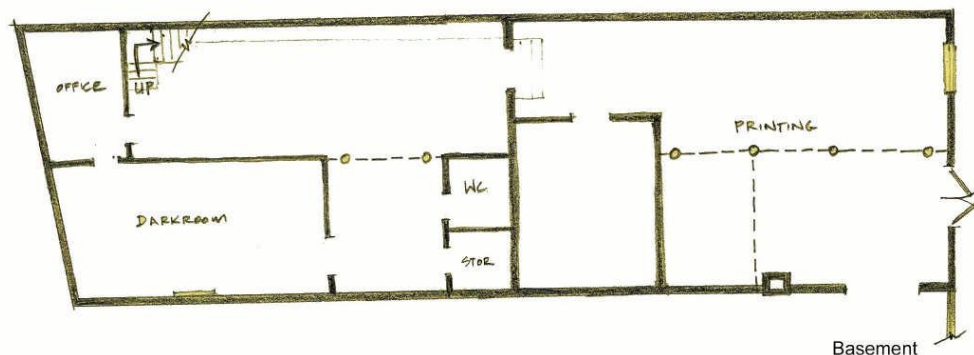
Bank of Tryon Building, Polk County, NC



Second Floor



First Floor



Basement



Bank of Tryon Building – Floor Plans
(Not to scale)

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Section 8. Statement of Significance

Summary

Organized in 1905 and housed in the Ballenger Company store, the Bank of Tryon was the first bank established in Polk County, North Carolina. In the winter of 1907 and 1908, the Bank of Tryon erected a new two-story brick and stone Romanesque Revival-inspired building. The new building on Trade Street in Tryon, the town's principal commercial area, was enlarged in the late 1910s or early 1920s. The Bank of Tryon merged with the People's Bank and Trust Company in 1927, and sold the building, which was then leased for offices. Since 1935, the building has been home to the *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, the world's smallest daily newspaper. Seth M. Vining published the first edition of the *Bulletin* on January 31, 1928, and the newspaper quickly became an integral part of the community's social fabric. Vining purchased the building in 1959, and the newspaper operation continued to grow during the second half of the twentieth century, eventually occupying the whole building.

The Bank of Tryon Building, which has local significance, meets National Register Criterion A for its association with the Bank of Tryon, the first bank located in Polk County, and the *Tryon Daily Bulletin*, the community's renowned daily newspaper. The Bank of Tryon Building also meets National Register Criterion C for its Romanesque Revival-inspired commercial architecture. The bold features of the façade remain largely intact and the building is a good example of the early commercial architecture in Tryon. The bank building is one of the few commercial structures located along Trade Street that retains a relatively high degree of historic integrity. The period of significance for the building extends from its completion in 1908 to 1957; the years after 1957 do not meet Criteria Consideration G for exceptional significance.

Historical Background and Context for Early Banks in Polk County

The small mountain town of Tryon, North Carolina, located in southern Polk County near the North Carolina-South Carolina state line, remained a modest settlement through much of the nineteenth century. The community began to take shape following the arrival of the Asheville-Spartanburg Railroad, which reached Tryon in 1877. Built with the intention of connecting South Carolina ports and markets with people and resources in North Carolina, Tennessee, and the Ohio Valley, the railroad had a dramatic impact on the economic and social development of Tryon in the late-nineteenth century. Trains between South Carolina and Asheville began to expose a wide range of visitors to the community. Located at the base of the Saluda Grade, the steepest mainline railroad grade in the country, Tryon became a regular stopping place as northbound trains took on helper engines and southbound trains cooled their wheel bearings and brakes

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before continuing. As a result of the frequent stopovers, a hotel and several boarding houses were erected to accommodate the accidental tourists, and Tryon's reputation as a pleasant resort quickly spread.³

Following its incorporation in 1885, Tryon was laid out in a circle around the railroad depot. Trade Street, the town's single commercial street, ran parallel to the railroad tracks to the east and northeast. T. T. Ballenger established a dry goods store and a blacksmith shop on Trade Street at its intersection with Oak Street in the 1880s. Ballenger, who built Tryon's first hotel in 1882, was one of the town's most prominent citizens and was named its first mayor. Tryon grew steadily through the late-nineteenth century as winter visitors came to enjoy the mild Thermal Belt climate, people with respiratory ailments came for the restorative air, and fruit growers established orchards and vineyards in the area. By 1900, the south end of Trade Street had begun to develop. In January 1904, a fire started in the clothing room of Ballenger's store, destroying several buildings, including John Orr's store and the Lanier Club's 700-volume library, which was housed in the store. Despite the setback, the two main commercial blocks of Trade Street, north and south of Oak Street, began to take their present form in the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁴

The rebuilding of the library demonstrated the strong sense of community spirit that existed in Tryon. The Lanier Club had started the library in 1889 with the donation of two volumes of poetry by the widow of renowned poet Sidney Lanier, who died in Tryon in 1881. After fire destroyed the library's collection the community came together to build a permanent library building. Major William E. Strong, a retired civil engineer, drew the plans and prepared the blueprints; Strong is listed as an architect in early business directories. John Orr, whose store was destroyed along with the Lanier Club's library, acted as contractor for the library and completed the new building for \$1,375. William Lindsey, a retired lawyer, helped with the legal work. E. E. Missildine, the town's pharmacist, contributed the bricks, and Charles Godshaw, a retired judge, donated the wainscoting. On December 21, 1905, the first meeting was held in the Lanier Library, located at the intersection of Melrose Avenue and Chestnut Street across the railroad tracks from downtown Tryon.⁵

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Tryon had a year-round population of more than 300 people, and development of the commercial area along Trade Street began to reflect the needs of a growing population. *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* for 1904 recorded two doctors; a pharmacist; an architect; two general merchandise stores (John Orr and the Ballenger Company); one hotel

³ Diane E. Lea and Claudia Roberts, *An Architectural and Historical Survey of Tryon, North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1979), 1-3; and Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 188.

⁴ Lea and Roberts, 2-3. *The Polk County News* (January 21, 1904).

⁵ Lea and Roberts, 4-5.

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and seven boarding houses; two livery stables; and a weekly newspaper, *Tryon Bee*, published by George Morton. Morton suffered from acute respiratory and stomach ailments and came to Tryon in 1896 for the restorative climate with a grim prognosis. Morton lived for another thirty years, became a successful fruit grower and, in 1896, founded the newspaper, which later became *The Polk County News* under W. F. Little.⁶

Another individual to significantly impact Tryon in the early twentieth century was James B. Hester (1864-1958), who came to Tryon in 1903 as the Southern Railway station agent. Born in Pickens, South Carolina, Hester's seven siblings moved to Texas during the Reconstruction period, but Hester chose to stay and worked as a farmer and telegraph operator. After relocating to Tryon, he married Minnie Ballenger and together they had three children. In 1905, Hester, along with James Norwood, J. D. Freeman, and T. T. Ballenger, organized the Bank of Tryon, the first bank located in Polk County. Hester served as cashier for the bank, which opened in March 1905 in the rebuilt Ballenger Company's store at the corner of Trade and Oak streets. The Bank of Tryon opened with \$10,000 of capital stock. Prior to the formation of a bank in Polk County, however, at least three other institutions from around the region were advertising in *The Polk County News*, hoping to serve the financial needs of county residents. These banking institutions included the Bank of Rutherfordton, the Asheville branch of Wachovia Loan and Trust Company, and First National Bank of Spartanburg, South Carolina.⁷

The Carolina State Bank of Saluda—the second bank formed in Polk County—began advertising its organization in 1907, with D. C. Barrow serving as president, Dr. E. B. Goelet as vice-president, and H. B. Lane as cashier. A published statement in February 1908 showed the Carolina State Bank with \$5,000 capital stock and \$28,520 in total assets. By 1922, the number of banks in Polk County had grown to five: two in Tryon, two in Saluda, and one in Columbus. The People's Bank and Trust Company of Tryon, Bank of Saluda, and Polk County Bank and Trust Company of Columbus were all established between 1915 and 1922.⁸

A notice in the February 14, 1907 edition of *The Polk County News* stated that the Bank of Tryon was contemplating the construction of a building next to Ballenger's store. In September 1907, the Bank of Tryon announced its plans to "erect a building upon the site next to the Ballenger Co. The building will be of brick, 25 by 50, two stories, fitted with modern conveniences. The second story will be used for offices." Property for the bank was purchased from T. T. Ballenger on October 8, 1907 (Deed 24/18). The building appears to have been completed either in late 1907 or early 1908.⁹

⁶ *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* (Raleigh, NC: The News & Observer, 1904), 466.

⁷ *The Polk County News* (February 16 and March 16, 1905); *Tryon Daily Bulletin* (November 25, 1958); and Polk County Historical Association, *Polk County, North Carolina History* (Tryon, NC: Polk County Historical Association, Inc., 1983), 15.

⁸ Polk County Historical Association, 15. *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* (1915 and 1922 editions).

⁹ *The Polk County News* (February 14, 1907 and September 19, 1907); and Polk County Register of Deeds Office, Columbus, NC.

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Bank of Tryon, ca. 1908, Tryon, NC

(Source: Tryon Daily Bulletin)

An early photograph of the Bank of Tryon building shows the structure to be freestanding with three-bay side elevations. The building was later enlarged to the rear, probably in the late 1910s and certainly by 1929, when it appears at its present size on the Sanborn map. By 1929, the building was joined on both sides by two-story commercial buildings, completing the full block between Oak Street and Maple Street. J. B. Hester ran the Bank of Tryon until 1927, when it merged with the People's Bank and Trust Company to form the First Bank and Trust Company, with W. F. Little, former editor of *The Polk County News*, as manager. The Bank of Tryon Building was sold to Hester's daughter, Hally H. Conrad, for \$17,000 on June 30, 1927 (Deed 52/598). Hester then went into the insurance business, working in that field until his retirement.¹⁰

¹⁰ Sanborn maps (1929); *Tryon Daily Bulletin* (November 25, 1958); and Polk County Register of Deeds Office.

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As a result of the stock market crash in 1929, all Polk County banks were forced out of business when their larger corresponding banks in neighboring cities also failed. Until 1931, when the Tryon Bank and Trust Company organized, Polk County residents did their banking across the state line in South Carolina at the Mutual Bank of Landrum, which survived the Depression. In January 1931, the Tryon Bank and Trust Company was organized from the remains of the First Bank and Trust Company. E. E. Missildine, a board member of the former bank, became president of the new institution. Julian Hester, son of James Hester, served as cashier for the new bank. In 1965, the Tryon Bank and Trust Company merged with North Carolina National Bank and remained the only bank in Polk County until 1967, when a branch of First Citizens Bank and Trust opened in Saluda.¹¹

Seven months after the Bank of Tryon Building was sold to Hally Conrad, on January 31, 1928, Seth M. Vining Sr. (1899-1986) published the first issue of the *Tryon Daily Bulletin*. Born in Eufaula, Alabama, Vining began his career working at the *Eufaula Daily Citizen* in 1911. After serving as editor of his college newspaper, running the college printing department, and starting a short-lived newspaper in Florida, Vining married Gladys Gibbs, a Polk County native, and began working as foreman of *The Polk County News*, a weekly paper, in 1927. With extra time on his hands, Vining put together the first four-page edition of the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* himself, stating in his editorial:

“This, the initial issue of The Tryon Daily Bulletin, goes to you as a result of our firm belief that such a publication will be of service to the general public as an effective medium for immediate advertising and for the transmission of important community news while it is still news.... The Bulletin is not attempting to take the place of a newspaper, for its miniature size makes it impossible, and all news matter will necessarily be very brief but sufficient to be informative.”

The first edition of the paper contained two major stories reporting on the election of new officers of the Tryon Chamber of Commerce and a fire that heavily damaged the Shields & Morris Plumbing Company building on Trade Street. The *Bulletin* was distributed freely for the first six months, and after that the paper cost one cent.¹²

From the beginning, Vining printed the *Bulletin* on a hand-fed letterpress, which was located in a print shop in the basement of the A&P grocery store on Trade and Maple streets. The typesetting, which Vining did himself in the early days, demanded considerable skill. Vining rarely wrote out news stories in advance but set the story directly in type, which required forming the words letter by letter from the type case. The set copy was then proofread upside down and backwards, and after completing the printing of a

¹¹ Polk County Historical Association, 15-16.

¹² *Tryon Daily Bulletin* (January 31, 1928); and *Tryon Daily Bulletin, Celebrating 70 Years: 1928-1998* (Souvenir edition), 2-3.

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page, each letter had to be methodically returned to the type case. Elbert H. Arledge joined the paper in 1930 as Vining's print assistant, working the large press. Arledge's brother, Quinton Arledge, also worked in the press room during the 1940s.¹³

The original *Tryon Daily Bulletin* was printed on paper five-and-a-half by eight-and-a-half inches (the size of *Readers Digest*), hence the claim that it was the world's smallest daily newspaper. Advertisements ran for a cost of thirty cents per inch, and twenty-five cents per inch for repeat ads. In his initial editorial, Vining explained that in his role as editor, reporter, printer, and manager, "If we fail to solicit your advertising do not feel slighted...it will be impossible for the advertising manager to call on every business house each day, for that reason a reduction is made in the rate to monthly advertisers." Carter Brown, owner of the Pine Crest Inn (NR, 1982) in Tryon, took out the first advertisement in the paper. According to oral tradition, Brown came to Vining's office to inquire about advertising and was told the rates. When asked how he wanted the ad to read, Brown responded simply "Pine Crest Inn."¹⁴

Vining filled the paper with news about the people in the community and their activities—births, deaths, weddings, jobs, social gatherings, etc. The paper eventually outgrew the basement print shop, and in 1935, moved into the Bank of Tryon Building. The paper's offices shared the first story of the building with Hester Real Estate; various other businesses were located on the second story and in the basement. The *Tryon Daily Bulletin* was published six days a week until World War II, when scarcity of materials necessitated cutting back to five days. The paper was expanded to its current size (eight-and-a-half by eleven inches) in 1955, allowing for larger ads, more photos, and longer articles.¹⁵

Under Vining's direction, the *Tryon Daily Bulletin* became an important component of the Tryon community by focusing on "good news" and the people that gave the town its unique character. In the 1940s, Robert Ripley met with Vining about including the *Bulletin* in his "Believe It Or Not!" series. During the visit Ripley reportedly commented that it was nothing to publish the world's smallest daily newspaper, but to support a family with it for more than ten years was indeed a significant accomplishment. In 1959, Vining and his wife, Gladys, purchased the Bank of Tryon Building, as the newspaper staff and operation had expanded (Deed 115/47). On January 13, 1970, the Vinings sold the paper to their son, Seth Jr., who had been made editor around the same time (Deed 151/957). Seth Vining Sr. retired in 1975. Seth Vining Jr. and his wife, Marjorie, ran the paper until 1989, when the building and newspaper were sold to the current editor and publisher, Jeff Byrd.¹⁶

¹³ *Tryon Daily Bulletin, Celebrating 70 Years: 1928-1998* (Souvenir edition), 2 and 14-15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2. *Tryon Daily Bulletin* (January 31, 1928).

¹⁵ *Tryon Daily Bulletin, Celebrating 70 Years: 1928-1998* (Souvenir edition), 2-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3, 6-7, and 40-41; and Polk County Register of Deeds Office, Columbus, NC.

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Architectural Context

The early commercial architecture of Tryon, specifically nineteenth-century structures built after the arrival of the railroad, has been lost in the intervening decades of prosperity and growth. The establishment of rail service through Tryon brought about a slow but steady influx of newcomers in the 1880s and 1890s, and new businesses opened to meet the needs of a growing population. Many of the new people came from northern cities or from the low country of South Carolina, bringing with them knowledge of fashionable architectural styles and influences that helped to shape the character of the commercial and residential sections of town. Trade Street, which followed the route of the railroad through town, developed into the primary business location, with its buildings standing along one side and overlooking the street and railroad tracks to the west and southwest. The first commercial structures erected on Trade Street were relatively plain, one- and two-story frame buildings. Significant building fires in 1904 and 1913, and the ever-present threat of fire, eventually led to the replacement of the early frame buildings with more permanent masonry structures through the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁷

Oak Hall was one of the largest and most elaborate buildings erected in Tryon after the railroad was completed. Built as the Tryon City Hotel in 1882 by T. T. Ballenger and John Garrison, it was also the only building constructed specifically as a hotel to serve Tryon's tourism industry. The hotel was a large frame structure with Italianate and Queen Anne ornamentation that was restrained yet stylish for its day. Before it was demolished in 1979, Oak Hall effectively influenced the future architectural character of Tryon, with local builders and architects favoring popular styles with tasteful ornamentation.¹⁸

According to Sanborn maps of Tryon, the two main block of Trade Street had reached their present level of development by 1929. The majority of commercial buildings found on Trade Street are two- and three-story, rectangular plan brick buildings with flat roofs behind stepped or shaped parapets, corbelled cornices, recessed panels, and large windows often arranged in groups. The three-story Missildine's Drug Store was built in 1913 at the southeast corner of Trade and Oak streets to replace an earlier building that burned. It is one of the more elaborate structures within the commercial area and displays segmental arch window openings, decorative window hoods, stone belt courses and accents, and a corbelled cornice. Only two buildings within the commercial blocks allude to particular architectural styles—the Romanesque Revival-style Bank of Tryon Building and the streamlined Art Moderne style of the Tryon Theatre, built around 1940.

A significant number of buildings on Trade Street have lower facades and storefronts that have been remodeled, including the other buildings that adjoin the Bank of Tryon Building in the northern block. The

¹⁷ Lea and Roberts, 9 and 13-14; and Bishir, et al, 188.

¹⁸ Lea and Roberts, 9.

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façade of the Ballenger Company building at the northeast corner of Trade and Oak streets, and located on the south side of the Bank of Tryon Building, was originally set back from the sidewalk. In the 1970s, a one-story block was built onto the front of the Ballenger Company building to the edge of the sidewalk and in line with the façade of the Bank of Tryon Building. This addition contains modern storefronts and recessed entrances and, after 1980, a shed roof canopy supported on wood posts was added to the upper part of the main building to create a sheltered second-story terrace on top of the addition. The North Trade Building, located immediately north of the Bank of Tryon Building, is a plain two-story brick building with a corbelled cornice, belt courses of contrasting brick, and decorative concrete panels. The lower façade, however, appears to have been completely remodeled in the 1970s with new brickwork and a deeply recessed entrance bay. A slender cast iron pilaster attached to a single brick post in the opening to the entrance recalls the original design of the façade. The two connected buildings (#28-38) that stand at the southeast corner of Trade and Maple streets are both plain two-story brick buildings with little exterior enrichment. A metal, hip-roof canopy extends across the façade of both buildings, connecting them visually and, in the 1970s, the lower façade of both buildings was remodeled with arched window openings, plate glass windows, and recessed entrances.

The Romanesque Revival details of the Bank of Tryon Building constitute a superficial treatment of the façade on the otherwise modest building. The stone accents and projecting parapet, however, give weight to the composition of façade in keeping with the massive appearance typical of the style. Renewed interest in Romanesque architecture, a round-arched medieval style, started in the mid-nineteenth century, but many of its design elements were simply incorporated into the more popular Greek Revival and Italianate styles. In the 1880s, Boston architect, Henry Hobson Richardson, began designing imposing, Romanesque-inspired buildings that eventually evolved into a distinctively American style of architecture known as Richardsonian Romanesque. The authoritative and massive appearance of many Romanesque Revival-style buildings derives largely from their uncomplicated building shapes and rooflines, repeated arch motifs, and rough-faced stone and brick exterior materials. The Romanesque Revival elements on the Bank of Tryon Building help to portray a sense of security, an appropriate architectural expression for an institution entrusted with the financial resources of the community. The Bank of Tryon Building retains the signal features of its Romanesque Revival design, including the composition of the façade, arched window openings, rough-faced stone belt courses, and projecting parapet block. In the 1970s, a car struck the façade of the building, causing substantial damage, but the subsequent rebuilding of the lower façade, using original materials, restored the original façade design with the exception of decorative brick patterning beneath the large window. Replacement of the main entry door and large front window do not diminish the overall integrity of the façade. The distinctive architecture and relatively high integrity of the Bank of Tryon Building combine to make the structure one of the most important commercial buildings on Trade Street in Tryon.

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Section 10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property for the Bank of Tryon Building (present day office of the Tryon Daily Bulletin) contains the full extent of Polk County tax parcel T8-B2. The boundary is shown by a heavy line and described fully on the accompanying survey map, "Jeffrey A & Helen S. Byrd, Tryon Twp., Polk Co., No. Car.," prepared by Butler Associates and dated July 14, 1997.

Boundary Justification

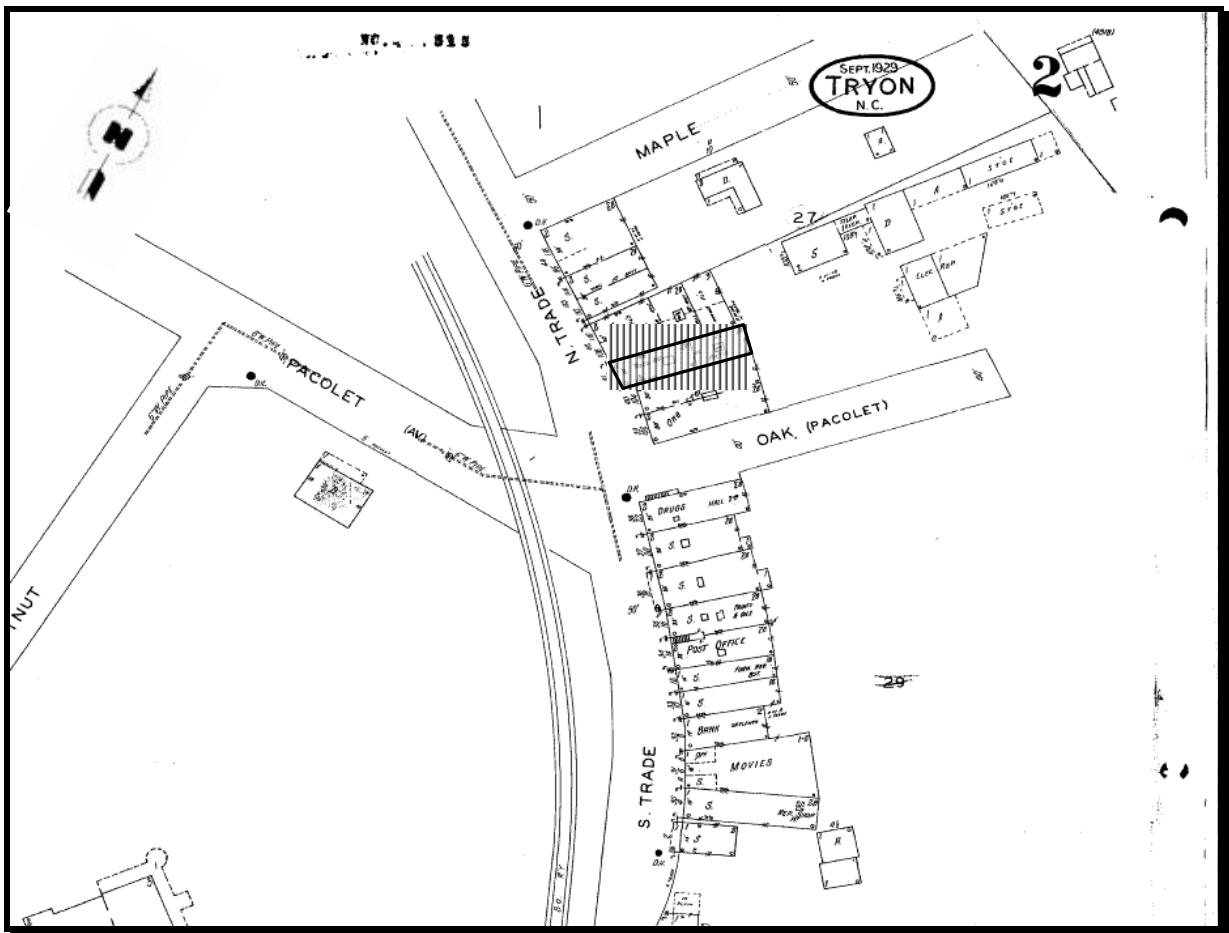
The boundary of the nominated property includes the small urban lot historically associated with the building. The property is described in Polk County Deed Book 164, page 1431.

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Bank of Tryon Building (Tryon Daily Bulletin Building), 16 N. Trade St., Tryon
(Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Tryon, NC, Sept. 1929 – Aug. 1941, Sheet 2)

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Photograph Index

All photographs of Bank of Tryon Building at 16 North Trade Street in Tryon by Chris Bartol of Bartol Photography on August 23, 2006. Digital images kept at the Survey and Planning Branch of the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh, North Carolina.

1. Façade, view to east
2. Facade, oblique view to northeast
3. Rear (east) elevation, view to west
4. Interior – ceiling of 1st story reception area, view to west
5. Interior – bank vault door, 1st story, view to east
6. Interior – 2nd story office, view to east into hallway
7. Interior – 2nd story hall, view to east
8. Interior – basement, rear area with printing presses, view to west